ADVERSARY PROCEEDING COVER SHE (Instructions on Reverse)	ADVERSARY PROCEEDING NUMBER (Court Use Only)		
PLAINTIFFS	DEFENDANTS		
Christian Behrend Doscher	Education Credit Management Corporation		
ATTORNEYS (Firm Name, Address, and Telephone No.)	ATTORNEYS (If Known)		
none (pro se)			
PARTY (Check One Box Only)	PARTY (Check One Box Only)		
	☐ Debtor ☐ U.S. Trustee/Bankruptcy Admin		
□ Creditor □ Other			
□ Trustee	□ Trustee		
CAUSE OF ACTION (WRITE A BRIEF STATEMENT OF CAUSE			
Full discharge of all student loans based on undue hardship and disability. 11 U.S.C. § 523(a)(8)			
·			
Million Million	Orson		
(Number up to five (5) boxes starting with lead cause of action as			
FRBP 7001(1) - Recovery of Money/Property	FRBP 7001(6) - Dischargeability (continued)		
11-Recovery of money/property - §542 turnover of property	61-Dischargeability - §523(a)(5), domestic support		
12-Recovery of money/property - \$547 preference	68-Dischargeability - §523(a)(6), willful and malicious injury		
☐ 13-Recovery of money/property - §548 fraudulent transfer ☐ 14-Recovery of money/property - other	 ✓ 63-Dischargeability - §523(a)(8), student loan ☐ 64-Dischargeability - §523(a)(15), divorce or separation obligation 		
	(other than domestic support)		
FRBP 7001(2) - Validity, Priority or Extent of Lien 21-Validity, priority or extent of lien or other interest in property	65-Dischargeability - other		
FRBP 7001(3) – Approval of Sale of Property	FRBP 7001(7) - Injunctive Relief		
31-Approval of sale of property of estate and of a co-owner - §363(h)	71-Injunctive relief – imposition of stay		
FRBP 7001(4) – Objection/Revocation of Discharge	FRBP 7901(8) Subordination of Claim or Interest		
41-Objection / revocation of discharge - §727(c),(d),(e)	81-Subordination of claim or interest		
FRBP 7001(5) - Revocation of Confirmation	FRBP 7001(9) Declaratory Judgment		
☐ 51-Revocation of confirmation	91-Declaratory judgment		
FRBP 7001(6) – Dischargeability	FRBP 7001(10) Determination of Removed Action		
66-Dischargeability - §523(a)(1),(14),(14A) priority tax claims	01-Determination of removed claim or cause		
62-Dischargeability - §523(a)(2), false pretenses, false representation,			
actual fraud	Other		
67-Dischargeability - §523(a)(4), fraud as fiduciary, embezzlement, larceny	SS-SIPA Case – 15 U.S.C. §§78aaa et.seq. 02-Other (e.g. other actions that would have been brought in state court		
(continued next column)	if unrelated to bankruptcy case)		
☐ Check if this case involves a substantive issue of state law	☐ Check if this is asserted to be a class action under FRCP 23		
☑ Check if a jury trial is demanded in complaint	Demand \$11,000		
Other Relief Sought			
relief from IRS tax offset			

BANKRUPTCY CASE IN WHICH THIS ADVERSARY PROCEEDING ARISES				
NAME OF DEBTOR Christian Doscher		BANKRUPTCY CASE NO. 12-44213		
DISTRICT IN WHICH CASE IS PENDING Western District	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	DIVISION OFFICE	NAME OF JUDGE BDL	
RELATED ADVERSARY PROCEEDING (IF ANY)				
PLAINTIFF	DEFENDAN	Γ	ADVERSARY PROCEEDING NO.	
DISTRICT IN WHICH ADVERSARY IS PENI	DING	DIVISION OFFICE	NAME OF JUDGE	
SIGNATURE OF ATTORNEY (OR PLAINTIFF)				
9-15-15 PRINT NAME OF ATTORNEY (OR PLAINTIFF) Christian Doscher		ORNEY (OR PLAINTIFF)		

INSTRUCTIONS

The filing of a bankruptcy case creates an "estate" under the jurisdiction of the bankruptcy court which consists of all of the property of the debtor, wherever that property is located. Because the bankruptcy estate is so extensive and the jurisdiction of the court so broad, there may be lawsuits over the property or property rights of the estate. There also may be lawsuits concerning the debtor's discharge. If such a lawsuit is filed in a bankruptcy court, it is called an adversary proceeding.

A party filing an adversary proceeding must also must complete and file Form 104, the Adversary Proceeding Cover Sheet, unless the party files the adversary proceeding electronically through the court's Case Management/Electronic Case Filing system (CM/ECF). (CM/ECF captures the information on Form 104 as part of the filing process.) When completed, the cover sheet summarizes basic information on the adversary proceeding. The clerk of court needs the information to process the adversary proceeding and prepare required statistical reports on court activity.

The cover sheet and the information contained on it do not replace or supplement the filing and service of pleadings or other papers as required by law, the Bankruptcy Rules, or the local rules of court. The cover sheet, which is largely self-explanatory, must be completed by the plaintiff's attorney (or by the plaintiff if the plaintiff is not represented by an attorney). A separate cover sheet must be submitted to the clerk for each complaint filed.

Plaintiffs and Defendants. Give the names of the plaintiffs and defendants exactly as they appear on the complaint.

Attorneys. Give the names and addresses of the attorneys, if known.

Party. Check the most appropriate box in the first column for the plaintiffs and the second column for the defendants.

Demand. Enter the dollar amount being demanded in the complaint.

Signature. This cover sheet must be signed by the attorney of record in the box on the second page of the form. If the plaintiff is represented by a law firm, a member of the firm must sign. If the plaintiff is pro se, that is, not represented by an attorney, the plaintiff must sign.

CHRISTIAN DOSCHER,

VS.

CORPORATION,

Debtor,

Creditor

EDUCATION CREDIT MANAGEMENT

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UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT

Case No. 12-44213-BDL

PLAINTIFF'S ADVERSARY COMPLAINT **FOR CHAPTER 7 BANKRUPTCY**

Jurisdiction

1. This is a chapter 7 bankruptcy proceeding, the Court has jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. §§ 1334 and 157(b)(2)(I).

Parties

- 2. Christian Doscher is a single individual, no dependants, and is Plaintiff in this action.
- 3. Education Credit Management Corporation ('ECMC') is a corporation and manages

Plaintiff's currently outstanding student loans and is the Defendant.



4. Courts have a duty to construe *pro se* pleadings liberally, including pro se motions.

- 5. In 1994, Plaintiff took out several student loans to attend the "Business Computer Training Institute", from which he graduated that same year. The loans total more than \$10,000, are currently in default and have been since at least 2007, and Plaintiff seeks full discharge of them by reason of undue hardship. 11 U.S.C. § 523(a)(8)(B).
- 6. In documents sent from ECMC to Plaintiff dated 3/24/15, the projected balance of the loans as of that date was given as "\$10,624.01. The total outstanding balance of the loans is currently \$10,677.50
- 7. In August of 2008, Plaintiff was approved for full Social Security Disability Benefits ('SSDB') due to medical diagnosis of co-morbid emotional disorders (borderline personality disorder and functional anxiety disorder), and began at that time to receive approximately \$760 per month in SSD benefits.
- 8. In 2011, Plaintiff was re-certified for the same benefits by a different physician, and thus has continued to receive maximum SSD cash benefits without interruption between September 2008 and September 2015.
- 9. Plaintiff's last job was as a part-time commercial truck driver with a company in

 He was fired from that job in August of 2010, and has not been employed afterward.

 Since August 2010, Plaintiff has subsisted on no other income than SSDB and food stamps.
- 10. Plaintiff has made good-faith efforts to repay on his school loans by a) seeking and receiving various forbearance and deferment options between 1994 and 2008, and b) having

between \$30 and \$50 deducted per month from his social security cash benefit to pay on these loans, which offset began in April 2013 and continues in the present (i.e., IRS offset). Said offsets were paid on the loans on or before the 3rd of every month between April 2013 and October 2015.

11. Plaintiff has also been diagnosed with sciatica, which of course is exacerbated by long periods of sitting, for which reason it is highly unlikely that he could ever again drive commercial trucks long-haul.

Fulfillment of the 3 Brunner-prongs

12. Plaintiff must fulfill the 3 Brunner-prongs by a preponderance of the evidence. Nys v.

- 13. First, the debtor must establish "that she cannot maintain, based on current income and expenses, a `minimal' standard of living for herself and her dependents if forced to repay the loans." Brunner, 831 F.2d at 396. The court noted that this portion of the test "comports with common sense" and had already "been applied frequently as the minimum necessary to establish `undue hardship." Id. (citing In re Bryant, 72 B.R. 913, 915 (Bankr.E.D.Pa.1987)).
- 14. In measuring income and expenses, the test is whether it would be "`unconscionable' to require the debtor to take steps to earn more income or reduce her expenses" in order to make payments under a given repayment schedule.

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15. As stated earlier in this Complaint, Plaintiff has been diagnosed by two different physicians since 2008 has having co-morbid emotional disorders preventing him from obtaining gainful and sustained employment, resulting in him qualifying for and receiving full social security disability benefits, and in fact Plaintiff has not been employed at all since August 2010. So yes, it would be unconscionable to require the debtor to earn more income. Plaintiff has no income whatsoever beyond SSD and food stamps.

16. After the IRS offset mentioned above, the money left in Plaintiff's bank account is \$750. His approximate monthly expenses after that point are as follows:

Rent:

550

Electric:

30 (increases in the winter due to baseboard-heater use)

Phone:

Gas (car): 40

Total:

\$645, when subtracted from 750, leaves \$105

17. Plaintiff's monthly food stamp allotment for the last year has been approximately \$190. This obviously is not enough for a single person to eat three healthy meals per day for one month. The IRS National Standard for food alone is \$301 per month. See IRS National Standards: Food, Clothing and Other Items, available at http://www.irs.gov/Businesses/ Small-Businesses-&-Self-Employed/National-Standards:-Food,-Clothing-and-Other-Items.

18. From Plaintiff's \$105 in cash leftover, he spends about \$75 each month to supplement his food stamps, leaving him with \$30 in cash, which obviously is not enough to cover his other monthly costs that are a legitimate part of a "minimal standard of living", but which he has had to severely diminish or cut out entirely, such as

Toiletries - \$25 auto-insurance - \$55 clothes - \$25 medicine - \$10



car gas/maintenance - \$40 car tabs (\$4 saved per month saved = \$50 per year) household cleaning supplies, etc. - \$10

totaling \$169, which, when subtracted from the remaining \$30, leaves a deficit of -\$139. Hence, Plaintiff's current income does not permit him to enjoy all the benefits of a "minimal" standard of living.

- 19. While a bankruptcy court may consider the IRS Standards as one piece of evidence in relation to its first prong analysis, [citation omitted], it should not [be used as] the sole measure of what is necessary to maintain a minimal standard of living." In re Howe, 319 B.R. 886, 892-93 (B.A.P. 9th Cir. 2005). So ECMC is free to argue that Doscher could go on a diet, so as to not need that extra \$75 to supplement his food stamps, so that he can have an extra \$75 to spend each month paying back the loan. Aside from how gratuitously insulting that is to a debtor whose severely minimized expenses still go over his below-poverty income, the most does not see the increase of even a few hundred dollars per month as sufficient to justify denial of school loan discharge.

 Moreover, the IRS standards are not wholly rejected just because they are not to be the sole basis of hardship determination.
- 20. ECMC will likely argue bad faith on the grounds that Plaintiff has not participated in any recent income-contingent repayment plan. This would be a faulty argument for number of reasons: a) he did do this between 1994 and 2008 and received forbearance and deferment in that period; b) I stands for the proposition that failure to participate in such program (there, it was the Income Contingent Repayment Loan Program (ICRP)) did not achieve the same result as Chapter 7 "fresh start" and

so such failure to participate in such program was not deemed a sign of bad faith; c) as will be shown below, income-contingent repayment plans mean nothing to Plaintiff, whose current living expenses exceed his already-below poverty income; d) Plaintiff did try between 2012 and 2014 to obtain discharge of his loans through a program offered by ECMC for discharge based on permanent disability, but they did not respond to his mailed-in application until the law had changed and that type of relief was no longer offered.

- 21. The undue hardship standard is high, but does not require showing abject poverty. The Bankruptcy Code does not require that the debtor "live in abject poverty . . . before a student loan may be discharged." In re Mallinckrodt, 260 B.R. 892, 900 (Bankr.S.D.Fla. 2001) (quoting In re Faish, 72 F.3d 298, 305 (3rd Cir.1995)). Satisfying the burden of proof on this element requires "more than a showing of tight finances," but stops short of "utter hopelessness." In re
 - 22. One Court found that minimizing living expenses demonstrated good faith.

It should be clear that Plaintiff's monthly expenses are insufficient to pay for things that would be a legitimate part of a minimal standard of living, such as car maintenance/insurance, food, winter heating bills, toiletries, medicine, etc. So he has minimized his expenses in a severe way, even if not in the most severe possible way.

23. In i student loans were discharged for persons living below poverty level despite the fact that their monthly expenses included obvious non-essentials like newspaper and cable to subscriptions. It would be unconscionable for Defendant to suggest that Plaintiff could have more money leftover each

month to pay school loans if he used less electricity, or ate less than 2 meals per day, or moved to a cheaper place to live, etc. "Minimal standard of living" does not mean the lowest form of civilized life.

24. Finally, one more example of conditions or "additional circumstances" contributing to

. Plaintiff graduated the Business Computer Training Institute program in the latter half of 1994, however, he received \$2700 in a class-action lawsuit brought against BCTI in 2007 for the poor quality of its educational program and fraud related thereto.

25. "To discharge any of their student loan debt to the Government, Debtors must prove by a preponderance of the evidence that, for a substantial portion of the loan repayment period, they would not be able to maintain even a "minimal" standard of living if forced to pay that debt." In

26. To satisfy the second prong of the Brunner test Debtors must prove that their state of affairs is likely to persist. Plaintiff's co-morbid emotional disorders, on the basis of which the Social Security Administration has twice diagnosed him as permanently unable to earn substantial income, is a legitimate basis upon which to conclude that Plaintiff's financial condition is likely to persist. The plaintiff's psychiatric disorder was believed to be permanent, sufficiently that his economics degree did not pose significant likelihood of future employment prospects. Plaintiff has no degree, and recently lost his commercial truck driver's license, so that he cannot work as a truck driver anymore without paying truck school tuition again, so as to prepare for and take the required written test and driving test.

It should be clear that two medical certifications qualifying Plaintiff for full social security disability on the basis of co-morbid emotional disorders, with expectation that they will disable him for life, qualifies as an 'insurmountable barrier' to debtor's financial recovery now and in the future.

Many courts of appeal have held that a debtor's "effort to seek out loan consolidation options that make the debt less onerous is an important component of the good faith inquiry," as it "illustrates that the debtor takes her loan obligations seriously and is doing her utmost to repay them despite her unfortunate circumstances." Educ. Credit Mgmt. Corp. v. Frushour (In re Frushour), 433 F.3d 393, 402 (4th Cir.2005) (citing Alderete v. Educ. Credit Mgmt. Corp. (In re Alderete), 412 F.3d 1200, 1206 (10th Cir. 2005). Plaintiff has made good-faith efforts to repay on his school loans by a) seeking and receiving various forbearances and deferrements between 1994 and 2008, and b) having between \$30 and \$50 deducted per month from his social security cash benefit to pay on these loans, which offset began in April 2013 and continues in the present (i.e., IRS offset). Said offsets were paid on the loans on or before the 3rd of every month between April 2013 and October 2015. Good faith attempts to pay and actual payments have thus occurred.

32. Even if Plaintiff had never sought to enter a repayment plan directly with Creditor, there is no per se rule saying a debtor cannot show good faith where he or she has not enrolled in an income-contingent repayment program. Education Credit Management Corp., v. Mosley, 494 F.3d 1320, 1327 (11th Cir. 2007). And it makes little sense for a person living below poverty to sign up for a loan-repayment plan when, as demonstrated above, Plaintiff does not have enough

monthly income leftover after paying monthly expenses for a bare minimum standard of living, to pay other debts.

33. In the partial discharge of student loans is not appropriate under §

- 34. If the Court finds partial discharge is a possibility, then partial discharge is not usually granted unless there is a finding that <u>Debtor's financial situation is likely to improve in the future</u>. In *Reed v. SLM Corp. (In re Reed), 2005 WL 1398479 (Bankr.D.Vt. June 13, 2005)*, the Court approved a partial discharge based on the fact that the debtor's future prospects suggested that she might be able to repay a portion of her student loan, because her net disposable income was "likely to increase in the near future to a level sufficient for her to make a meaningful repayment." *Id. at *4*. By contrast, for the reasons set forth above, Plaintiff's income is not likely to increase in the foreseeable future.
- 35. In the "certainty of hopelessness" only means exceptional circumstances, proven by preponderance of the evidence, strongly suggestive of continuing inability to repay over an extended period of time: "Strongly suggestive" is quite a bit less than "inevitably guaranteed". Thus lack of inevitable guarantee of future inability to reply is not fatal to a discharge petition.
- 36. Plaintiff has sued in civil court a private resident of Florida for libel, which case is currently pending in (i.e., Doscher v. Holding, Superior Court No. 15-2-01352-9), and thus expects to win a jury-determined award of damages for libel

and emotional distress. ECMC will seize on this to argue that any jury award should be applied to the school loans. However, Courts have found that Debtors applying an anticipated lump sum to expenses arising in their private life instead of to pay on the school loan, is acceptable and cannot show lack of good faith:

See also Marcotte v. Brazos Higher Educ. Servs. Corp. (In re Marcotte), 455 B.R. 460, 473 n.20 (Bankr. D. S.C. 2011) (citing Pena, 155 F.3d at 1114 (where Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals held that the debtors satisfied the good-faith prong even though they received a post-petition lump-sum payment for past-due disability and used it to purchase an approximately 20-year-old car and pay other bills rather than pay the student loan debt)).

37. ECMC may argue that the rest of a says that where Plaintiff is expected to receive lump-sum payments, only a partial discharge is appropriate. But in this Mitchell is distinguishable, as Mitchell had some ability to work, enough to work 16 hours a week. By contrast, the facts already established above (Plaintiff's below-poverty income, which doesn't meet his basic living needs, his minimizing of living expenses far below a normal minimal standard of living level, and his inability to obtain work in the future due to mental disability), indicate, at least by preponderance of evidence, that Plaintiff would need to retain any award from the jury in *Doscher v. Holding*, to supplement his monthly income, for a period to extend into the foreseeable future so that he can pay his minimal living expenses in a timely fashion Plaintiff's Adversary Complaint - 11

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each month. It is unconscionable to take away Plaintiff's only source of income which is his only hope of supplementing his poverty-level income and so to actually live at a minimal standard. Plaintiff's only automobile is 19 years old, presently needs major work as might be expected (shocks, brakes, tires, uv-joint replacement, transmission rebuild, ignition replacement, electrical system overhaul, new radiator or radiator flush, heater does not work [needs heatercore replacement], etc), and he cannot legally drive it without insurance, which would run him about \$55 per month given that he hasn't had insurance since 2011 and about 2 years ago received an infraction for going 5 mph over the speed limit in an Plaintiff's clothes are wearing out and haven't been replaced since 2009. And if Plaintiff needed hospitalization due to his disorders, social security would use some of his monthly SSD cash benefit to pay part of the resulting hospital bill, which of course reduces his SSD to the point of being insufficient to pay rent or other typical monthly bills, that is, if the future juryaward in Doscher v. Holding be given to Creditor. "Only the portion that results in undue hardship should be discharged." For all the above-cited reasons, any portion of the school loans that Doscher would have to pay would create undue hardship due to his already below-poverty status and unlikelihood of being able to increase his income in the future. Hence Mitchell is distinguishable, and a partial discharge would still create undue hardship for Plaintiff Doscher, since any civil damages award from a jury would need to be retained by Doscher to supplement his monthly income to avoid staying in the budget deficit disclosed earlier in this Complaint.

38. I, Christian Doscher, the Plaintiff/Debtor in the above entitled matter, certify under penalty of perjury and the laws of the United States that the factual allegations contained in this Adversary Complaint are true and accurate to the best of my knowledge.

Dated this 15th day of September, 2015

By:

CHRISTIAN DOSCHER, pro se